

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH STRENGTHENS FISH ADVISORY AND ISSUES TWO MORE**

(Richmond, Va.)—The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) strengthened a fish consumption advisory issued in 1999, cautioning people not to eat potentially PCB-contaminated fish from a 12-mile stretch of the Levisa Fork from Grundy, Va., downstream to the Virginia-Kentucky state line.

“The health department is recommending that people eat no fish of any kind taken from that section of the Levisa River,” said State Health Commissioner, Robert B. Stroube M.D., M.P.H. “The advisory is being issued due to recent tests conducted by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) that showed polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in fish exceed the health department’s level of concern.”

In addition to these more stringent guidelines, VDH is cautioning people about fish consumption from sections of Knox and Beaver Creeks in Southwest Virginia.

The health department is advising people to eat no more than two meals a month of any fish taken from the mainstream of Knox Creek in Buchanan County from the Virginia-Kentucky state line, upstream for 17 miles to its headwaters near the Virginia-West Virginia state line. VDH is also warning people to eat no more than one meal per month of fish taken from Beaver Creek in Washington County from the Beaver Creek Lake dam, downstream to the Virginia-Tennessee state line within the City of Bristol. Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant, nursing mothers and young children should entirely avoid eating any fish taken from either of these areas.

“Following the advice of this advisory will protect people who eat fish caught in these waters from adverse health effects from PCBs,” said Director of Health Hazards Control Khizar Wasti, Ph.D. Long-term consumption of fish contaminated with high levels of PCBs may increase the lifetime risk of cancer.

PCBs are a group of man-made industrial chemicals that exist as a mixture and may contain up to 209 individual compounds. Since 1977, PCBs have not been produced in the U.S., but they are still found in the environment. PCBs were once widely used as coolants and lubricants in transformers, capacitors and other electrical equipment.

Because PCBs tend to concentrate in the fatty tissues of the fish, VDH recommends the following precautions to reduce any potential harmful effects from eating fish:

- Eat the smaller, younger fish (within the legal limits). Younger fish are less likely to contain harmful levels of contaminants than larger, older fish.
- Remove the skin, the fat from the belly and top, and internal organs before cooking the fish.
- Bake, broil or grill on an open rack to allow fats to drain away from the meat.
- Discard the fats that cook out of the fish.
- Avoid or reduce the amount of fish drippings or broth that are used to flavor the meal.
- Eat less deep fried fish, since frying seals contaminants into the fatty tissue.

The Virginia Department of Health issues fish advisories based on the evaluation of fish tissue sample results provided by the state's Department of Environmental Quality. For more information on current fish advisories in Virginia, log onto the Virginia Department of Health’s Web site on fishing advisories at

[www.vdh.state.va.us/HHControl/fishing\\_advisories.htm](http://www.vdh.state.va.us/HHControl/fishing_advisories.htm)

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